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MONTEREY BROADBAND COMMITTEE MAILS BERKSHIRE CONNECT SURVEY TO TOWN RESIDENTS

Early in January, the Monterey Broadband Commission mailed a broadband survey to town residents urging its completion and return to Berkshire Connect by March 1, 2008.

The surveys are also available at Monterey Town Hall, The Monterey General Store and the Monterey Public Library. The survey can also be completed online at www.bcconnect.org.

The survey, a joint effort by Berkshire Connect and Pioneer Valley Connect, is designed to gather information that will identify more precisely where high speed internet service exists and, more importantly, where it does not exist. This information will be used to create mapping products that will be critical when working to provide service to unserved areas and will reinforce the inequity between eastern and western Massachusetts.

The Monterey Broadband Committee was formed to help bring broadband to the majority of Monterey. The committee estimates that only about one third of Monterey has access to high speed internet through DSL and T1 lines. The committee is currently working with the Monterey Select Board, Berkshire Connect and surrounding towns to come up with viable options.

Broadband is critical to Berkshire communities for many reasons. It has become a necessity to retain and attract business, from large-scale to home-based. It allows educators and students to communicate and conduct research. Having broadband access is also an issue of public health and safety, as it facilitates communication and the transfer of essential information in cases of emergency as well as accessing other information by public health and safety officials. For example, without broadband access, Board of Health volunteers often must take time off of work to attend training seminars that could be taken online.

Access to broadband is also more socially and environmentally responsible. It enables municipal governments to complete state and federal reporting requirements efficiently. It facilitates communication between government officials and their constituents, which is particularly important for small towns with limited staff hours. For residents with special needs, such as seniors and the disabled, broadband provides greater access to the world as well as better health monitoring opportunities and assistance with independent living. And of course, workers that telecommute reduce travel.

The Monterey Broadband Committee was appointed by the Monterey Select Board and meets regularly in Monterey. For complete information, including Committee updates, please refer to the town web site at [http://www.montereyma.gov/Public Documents/MontereyMA About/broadband](http://www.montereyma.gov/Public_Documents/MontereyMA_About/broadband).